

The THOREAU SOCIETY

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"GOD HIMSELF CULMINATES IN THE PRESENT MOMENT":
THOUGHTS ON THOREAU'S FAITH by Joel Porte

"In this refulgent summer it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life." Most of you will recognize those as the opening words of Emerson's Divinity School Address--delivered in Cambridge on this day one hundred forty years ago.

We do not know if Thoreau was present on that great occasion, but I rather doubt it. He was working hard in the small school he had opened in Concord just a month earlier and probably had no desire to spend Sunday, too, indoors--even if the sermon was unorthodox and the preacher Ralph Waldo Emerson. Just six weeks later, on August 19, 1838, Thoreau would in fact complain in his journal that the pealing of the sabbath bell disturbed him as he sat on the cliffs. It was, he said, "the sound of many catechisms and religious books twanging a canting peal round the world"; and he pronounced himself "sick at heart of this pagoda workshop." No, it is unlikely that Thoreau was himself in the chapel of Divinity Hall on that momentous Sunday evening. Apart from the fact that he had probably had enough of Harvard, Thoreau was particularly averse to staying indoors when the weather was good. And he had in fact anticipated Emerson's own mood and message in the Address the previous May when he jotted down this poem in his journal:

The school-boy loitered on his way
to school,
Scorning to live so rare a day by
rule,
So mild the air a pleasure 't was
to breathe,
For what seems heaven above was
earth beneath.

In view of the striking consonance of perceptions and attitudes that was already uniting Emerson and Thoreau, it would be impossible to say whether Thoreau's language in journal entries made during August and September actually echoed Emerson's words about its having "been a luxury to draw the breath of life" in that refulgent summer of 1838. "The crackling flight of grasshoppers is a luxury," Thoreau exclaimed one day; "it is a luxury to muse by a wall-side in the sunshine of a September afternoon," he insisted on another. Whether through coincidence or actual influence, Thoreau had come to share Emerson's belief that one's "faith should blend with the light of rising and of setting suns, with the flying cloud, the singing bird, and the breath of flowers." Though the orthodox would loudly condemn such talk as nature-worship or pantheism, Thoreau was no more afraid of these labels than Emerson was.

Feeling himself fundamentally nourished and sus-

The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and followers of Henry David Thoreau. Wendell Glick, Duluth, Minn., president; Mrs. Charles MacPherson, Acton, Mass., vice-president; and Walter Harding, State University, Geneseo, NY 14454, secretary-treasurer. Annual membership \$3.00; life membership, \$100.00. Address communications to the secretary.

tained by Alma Natura, the young Thoreau already knew that any definition of "faith" which would have meaning for him must blend with his experience in the natural world. He knew, too, that taking such a position would put him radically at odds with most of his neighbors. On September 3 he wrote: "The only faith that men recognize is a creed. But the true creed which we unconsciously live by, and which rather adopts us than we it, is quite different from the written or preached one." Like Emerson, Thoreau had been adopted by the refulgent summer and the luxury of living; and he would therefore always have trouble convincing his more conventional neighbors that he was any better than a mere village atheist. Perhaps this is why Emerson felt obliged, in his funeral oration on Thoreau, to insist that "whilst he used in his writings a certain petulance of remark in reference to churches or churchmen, he was a person of a rare, tender and absolute religion, a person incapable of any profanation, by act or by thought."

Now, Thoreau's petulance in regard to what he considered to be the merely nominal Christianity of many of his neighbors was abundantly in evidence in his first book, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, and undoubtedly contributed greatly to the commercial failure of that venture. In the "Sunday" section of the book Thoreau pronounced himself a follower of "the great god Pan" and mused sadly over the paradox that the all-loving and self-abnegating Jesus should somehow have given birth, in modern times, to the factionalism and exclusiveness of the various Christian sects. "What are time and space to Christianity," he writes, "eighteen hundred years, and a new world?--that the humble life of a Jewish peasant should have force to make a New York bishop so bigoted." Thoreau, we should note, is in fact not attacking Christ but rather the uses to which his teachings have been put. "It is necessary not to be Christian," he insists, "to appreciate the beauty and significance of the life of Christ." Since such is his logic, Thoreau must necessarily speak from the outside--as a self-declared non-Christian--in order to weigh the merits of Christ as a religious leader. "I know," he goes on, "that some will have hard thoughts of me, when they hear their Christ named beside my Buddha, yet I am sure that I am willing they should love their Christ more than my Buddha, for the love is the main thing, and I like him too." This is not petulance; it is insolence: "Their Christ . . . my Buddha . . . I like him too."

All of this is calculated, of course--calculated to get a rise out of his audience; for Thoreau loves a good fight and he is fighting mad over

the realization that religious intolerance and bigotry have turned the religion of love from its true path. The divine is multiform, in Thoreau's view; and he is in actuality less concerned with debating the opposed claims of Pan or Buddha or Christ than he is with defining the fundamental religious impulse: "for the love is the main thing." "God," he continues, quoting some unnamed source, "is the letter Ku, as well as Khu." Do we, Thoreau is asking, in fact know how to spell or pronounce the name of God? Should it matter whether it is spelled B-u-d-d-h-a or C-h-r-i-s-t? Now, he goes on to ask, can we "presume to fable of the ineffable"--which is to say, speak of the unspeakable? This is the posture, as Emerson says, of "a person of a rare, tender and absolute religion, a person incapable of any profanation"; for with an almost Hebraic awe, Thoreau forbears to utter the holy name or even to claim that he knows what it is.

Indeed, the attributes of the divine are an equally mysterious business; and Thoreau understands that we shall never clarify our religious principles until we purify our understanding of how it is possible to make meaningful predictions: "Pythagoras says, truly enough, 'A true assertion respecting God, is an assertion of God'; but we may well doubt if there is any example of this in literature." Thoreau did not need a Wittgenstein to tell him that theological problems are, at base, grammatical ones. Divinity, it seems, is the thing whereof, as yet, we may not truly speak; for "Divinity" is nothing less than the truth itself, and even our best words are but raids upon that inarticulate center.

The experience of that ultimate we may have, as others have had it before us, Thoreau insists: "The oldest Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the evil from the stature of the divinity; and still the trembling robe remains raised, and I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did." What is problematic is our articulation of that experience, since it is not a matter of logic, but rather of the "fringe" or atmosphere, the overtones, the poetic or extravagant aura that surrounds or accompanies our most serious or exalted speech. "The volatile truth of our words," Thoreau writes, "should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is instantly translated; its literal monument alone remains. The words which express our faith and piety are not definite; yet they are significant and fragrant like frankincense to superior natures." Let me emphasize what seems to be Thoreau's main point here: since the truth of the words that express our faith and piety is instantly translated--that is, gets away from us, flying off into some meta-language of the spirit--we must work hard to infer that higher, or deeper, sense of language from the residual monument we find on the page. Each word must be a kind of spiritual depth-charge, capable of exploding when it touches the bottom of our consciousness. And Thoreau's own practice is to load his language, even to the point of seeming obscurity, with that potential energy, that tendency toward literal instability, which makes them volatile and alive. "I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be extra-vagant enough," he writes, "may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limit of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have

convinced."

What is this truth of which Thoreau was convinced and which he worked so hard to express? Let me invoke a distinguished academic from the other place, Wallace Stevens' Professor Eucalyptus of New Haven, who said: "The search / For reality is as momentous as / The search for god." I think that is a sentence Thoreau could have written--did in fact write in another form. Thoreau was not afraid of that notoriously indefinite word reality; on the contrary, it was one of his favorites. It expressed his faith and piety and was significant and fragrant to him. If it seems to us a dubious linguistic item as it sits there abstractly on the page, ravaged by time and usage, that may be only because we lack the imagination, or courage, to confront it boldly and try to understand what it signifies in our lives. Thoreau did not avoid the challenge. To judge only by the second chapter of Walden, reality was the chief thing he craved and lived for--the object of his researches and the goal of his quest. "Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths," he writes, "while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments."

Here, as readers, we ought to stop and briefly consult our experience of this difficult concept, especially as we find it used in Transcendentalist writings. Though he did not need to, Thoreau could have gotten a standard philosophical definition of realism from Emerson, who tells us in various places that it implies Idealism or Platonism. The Realists, Emerson says, in their "famous dispute with the Nominalists . . . had a good deal of reason." For they believed, as did Emerson himself, that "General ideas are essences. They are our gods: they round and ennoble the most partial and sordid way of living. Our proclivity to details cannot quite degrade our life and divest it of poetry." Leaning on the traditional, technical meaning of the word, Emerson argues that the real is the idea, or essence, which lies behind or above the details of ordinary life and fills them with meaning. Pure ideas are the gods which hover over the illusions, or appearances, among which we live and provide them with their only true poetry. We must therefore look beyond ordinary experience to the reality--the truth--of which it is only a representation.

Is this what Thoreau means by reality--the ultimate truth which is concealed by the appearances among which we live and breathe? Such would seem to be the drift of the paragraph from which I have already quoted:

I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that is which appears to be. If a man should walk through this town and see only the reality, where, think you, would the "Mill-dam" go to? If he should give us an account of the realities he beheld there, we should not recognize the place in his description. Look at a meeting-house, or a court-house, or a jail, or a shop, or a dwelling-house, and say what that thing really is before a true gaze, and they would all go to pieces in your account of them.

Thoreau does seem here to be ratifying Emerson's Transcendental notion that our perceptions are merely skindeep and do not penetrate to the hidden meaning. The poet, or visionary, could thus be defined as a kind of Platonic enfant terrible who, as Arthur Rimbaud says, "through a long, immense and reasoned derangement of all the senses" habituates himself to seeing realities not available to ordinary views of the world--"a mosque instead of a factory, a school of drummers composed of angels, calashes on the roads of the sky, a drawing-room at the bottom of a lack: monsters, mysteries. . . ." Why not conclude, with Rimbaud, by "finding sacred the disorder of One's intelligence" if thereby ordinary life might be transformed into something strange and wonderful--"like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments"?

Though Rimbaud actually seems to have been talking about the metaphor-making power of the poet's eye, I have purposely reduced the Idealist/Platonic notion of realism to an absurdity with the help of his extravagances in order to highlight the dangers of seeing abstractly. I believe that Thoreau was in fact complaining that his neighbors were living according to a debased version of the Platonic scheme--in their case, however, seeing the world through eyes dimmed by received opinions and stock ideas. We conduct our lives according to the conventional fables in which we have come to believe and fail to notice that reality--the world in which we actually live our lives--is truly fabulous and inexhaustible. "May we not see God?" Thoreau asks.

Notice, to return to our paragraph, that Thoreau perceives the truths that he reports to us. When Thoreau walks down the main street of Concord, he does not think of something called the "Mill-dam" but rather experiences that place in all its concrete particularity--in the fullness of its being. His neighbors see a meeting-house, a court-house, a jail, a shop, a dwelling-house--that is, they see--superficially--a function, an institution, an abstract notion reified. But Thoreau wants to know "what that thing really is" as we come upon it in the street. He does not want to be awed and subdued by the idea that it represents. Such abstractions are "shams and delusions," what he calls the "mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition." To the penetrating eye of a true seer the jail, with all it stands for, would simply "go to pieces" and show forth for the poor item it really is. "When we are unhurried and wise," Thoreau says, "we perceive . . . that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality." We struggle with those shadows, Thoreau argues, and thus allow our preoccupations, prejudices, and habits to take the pith and substance out of life as it actually presents itself to us from moment to moment:

Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us.

Do those sound like the words of an ordinary kind of Platonist? Thoreau's "God"--the truth--is not somewhere off in space and time, separated from his being in the world, but rather embedded in "the reality that surrounds us." Nor is Thoreau some sort of literal-minded materialist for whom words are reducible to things and things to their physical substance. The word "reality," let us remember, is significant and fragrant for Thoreau, and not only points to our perceptions of the universe but also to our conceptions. Neither modality of the "real" must be allowed to overpower the other; if this happens, we are in danger of succumbing to "shams and delusions." Ideas are the realities that give meaning and value to physical experience; substance is the reality that links us to the world and gives weight and veracity to our conceptions. The intellect, as Thoreau says, "is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things." Without the solidity of reality there would be nothing for the intellect to work in; and if there were no "secret of things," that work would be meaningless.

In his appropriation of the world as a writer, Thoreau begins with things as they are and then proceeds to celebrate them in language that adds meaning to their substance and translates what is fleeting to the level of permanent truth. But that permanent truth must continue to culminate in the present moment; we must be able to test and re-animate it in our own experience. It is not an abstract truth that Thoreau is after, but one that can still be discovered in reality as we know it. Henry Thoreau of Concord seeks god in Concord, as Stevens says of Professor Eucalyptus,

. . . with an eye that does not look

Beyond the object. He sits in his room,
beside The window, close to the ram-
shackle spout in which The rain falls
with ramshackle sound. He seeks

God in the object itself, without much
choice. It is a choice of the commodious
adjective
For what he sees, it comes in the end to
that:

The description that makes it divinity,
still speech
As it touches the point of reverberation
--not grim
Reality but reality grimly seen

And spoken in paradisaal parlance new . . .

Notice, as Stevens says, that it does not matter much which object or experience we choose; the present moment is always good enough, and Professor Eucalyptus's evening is an ordinary one in New Haven. What matters is how our spirit greets that occasion with the commodious adjectives, the descriptions that make it divinity (such as Emerson's "refulgent summer" or Thoreau's phrase "sky water" for Walden Pond). No, reality is not grim, but it must seen "grimly"--fiercely, severely, honestly--if it is to divide us through the heart and marrow and leave us with the assurance that we have lived truly and deliberately. Thoreau's great sentence--"God himself culminates in the present moment, and

will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages"--is a kind of "paradisaal parlance new" that arises out of the "now and here" and attempts to redeem and revitalize the world for those who share its faith. That faith is simply a faith in the world that adopted Thoreau, as it adopts us all for a time. We have need, he writes, "not only to be spiritualized, but naturalized, on the soil of earth." For the man who thus places his faith in the creation, Thoreau continues, "who shall conceive what kind of roof the heavens might extend over him, what seasons minister to him, and what employment dignify his life!"

Such a man would claim, at the end of his life, that he did not need to make his peace with God because they had never quarrelled. "God could not be unkind to me if he should try," Emerson reports Thoreau as saying. Thoreau believed, to appropriate Emerson's phrase, in the "perfection of this world in which our senses converse"; and he could therefore insist, "here or nowhere is our heaven." It is hardly surprising, then, that he never felt obliged to turn his thoughts to another world. With the return of spring, Thoreau said, he recovered his innocence and the world re-created itself for him. In that perpetual morning light, he entered into the joy of his Lord, and thus was enabled in Wallace Stevens' words, to find the brilliant mercy of a sure repose, on this present ground.

11-8-53

These drawings are reproduced from Thoreau's Journal. If you wish to identify them, simply look up the journal entry for the date indicated in the numerals.

THE 1978 ANNUAL MEETING

The 1978 annual meeting of the Thoreau Society was held in the First Parish Church in Concord on Saturday, July 15. The meeting, opening at 10:15 a.m., was chaired by the president, Paul O. Williams. The secretary's report was accepted as printed in the Summer 1977 bulletin. The following treasurer's report was read and accepted:

TREASURER'S REPORT

Balance on Hand as of June 4, 1977 \$6,059.60

Receipts

Dues	\$2,051.75	
Sale of back copies	61.97	
Life memberships	1,000.00	
Royalties	63.01	
Gifts	308.00	
Sale of luncheon tick.	490.90	
Sale of photographs	27.00	
Interest	277.40	
Mailing	50.00	
	\$4,330.03	\$4,330.03
		\$10,389.63

Expenses

Annual Meeting	
(including lunch)	\$ 957.52
Postage & Handling	863.18
Printing	1,164.32
Miscellaneous	119.57
Photography	28.00

Bernstein Collection
Stationary

872.60	
21.97	
\$4,027.16	\$4,027.16
	\$6,362.47

BALANCE ON HAND AS OF JUNE 4, 1978 \$6,362.47

Thomas Blanding read the report of the nominating committee and the following were duly nominated and elected: President Wendell Glick of Duluth, Minn.; president-elect, Rev. Dana Greeley of Concord, Mass.; vice-president, Mrs. Charles MacPherson of Acton, Mass.; and secretary-treasurer, Walter Harding of Geneseo, N.Y.; all for terms of one year; and Linda Beaulieu of Holcomb, N.Y. and Raymond Borst of Auburn, N.Y., members of the executive committee for three years.

Professor Joel Porte of Harvard University then spoke on "God himself culminates in the present moment": Some Thoughts on Thoreau's Faith" and that address is printed in this bulletin. Paul Williams then presented the presidential address on "The Influence of Thoreau on the American Nature Essay" and that address will be printed in the fall bulletin.

After luncheon, Roland Robbins conducted the annual Thoreau quiz. Many options were offered for the afternoon. There was a forum on "Recent Developments in Thoreau Studies" at which Thomas Blanding reported on "Thoreau's Unfinished Nature Book"; Elizabeth Witherell reported on "Current Developments in the Princeton University Press Thoreau Edition"; and Richard Lebeaux reported on "Recent Psychological Approaches to Thoreau: the Geneseo Conference." A special visit to the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, Mass., was arranged. Mary Fenn conducted a tour of Thoreau's Fairyland. Marcia Moss exhibited the Thoreau treasures of the Concord Free Public Library; and Robert Needham conducted a tour of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

After the annual sherry party and box supper sponsored by the Thoreau Lyceum, the evening program was devoted to a delightful performance by Caroline Moseley entitled "Music in the Thoreau Parlor." This was followed by a surprise presentation of a new movie entitled "Thoreau's Maine Woods" by Robie Hubley and Jonathan Huberth that has been produced by Fenwick Productions (Box 277, West Hartford, Conn. 06119). The meeting came to a close with the presentation of the gavel by out-going president Paul Williams to incoming president Wendell Glick and a presentation to Paul Williams by Roland Robbins of a Thoreau cane.

Additional features of the week-end were an exhibition of photographs of Walden by Merlene Ogden and of newly discovered Daniel Ricketson papers, both at the Thoreau Lyceum, and an exhibition of Thoreau paintings by Sally Dunbar at the Concord Free Public Library.

Sunday morning a special Thoreau service was conducted at the First Parish Church, conducted by Robert Needham, at which Malcolm Ferguson, Anne R. McGrath, and Walter Harding spoke on Thoreau.

As usual, our thanks go to the Concord committee for its arrangements and in particular Lucille Needham for the coffee hour, Fuzzy Fenn for the wild flower displays, and David Dean for the audio.

Newspaper coverage of the meeting was particularly good. There were lengthy articles in the CONCORD JOURNAL for July 13 and 20; in the CONCORD PATRIOT for the same dates; and in the BOSTON GLOBE for July 15.

A MID-WINTER THOREAU SOCIETY MEETING.

The Thoreau Society has for many years discussed the possibility of holding a mid-winter meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association since so many of the academic members of the society hold membership in the MLA and are often unable to attend the summer meeting in Concord. Such a meeting has now been arranged experimentally. It will be held on the 27th of December, 1978, in the Gibson A Suite of the Hilton Hotel in New York City from 9 to 10:15 p.m. It will be entitled "New Views of Thoreau" and will consist of papers on "Thoreau and I: A Personal Note: by Raymond Gozzi and on "Thoreau and Eros" by Walter Harding.

CONCORD NEWS

The biggest Concord news is that THE CAIRN IS BACK!!!! Several years ago, when the state took over control of Walden Pond Reservation from the county, the cairn was removed for "preservation and safe-keeping." It was said that vandals were destroying it. The move caused great consternation among many Thoreauvians, for it had stood there for more than a century as a unique tribute to Thoreau's world-wide appeal. But on July 17, 1978 the cairn was returned to the site and we trust that ardent Thoreauvians will show their appreciation by bringing more rocks from afar to add to the growing pile.

A second piece of good news is that the park officials have established a guided tour of Walden. It is conducted four afternoons a week (Thursday through Sunday), leaving from the new parking lot at 3 p.m. We had the privilege of going on the first tour and we found it a fine one.

On the negative side, there still continues to be great problems with parking at the pond and new cars appear to park illegally as fast as other illegally parked cars are towed off. Crowds have become so great at the swimming beach that park officials have notified the American Red Cross they may have to take over the Red Cross beach for public swimming at any time.

We are happy to announce that the bronze plaque marking the site of the jail where Thoreau spent his famous night of incarceration has been returned to its place and is now fastened to a granite monument so that hopefully it will not disappear again. The plaque was originally donated to the society and Concord by Samuel Wellman. The restoration was paid for by the Thoreau Society and various donations.



11-22-53

WENDELL GLICK: OUR NEW PRESIDENT! AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

I was born March 22, 1916 in Evanston, Illinois, where my father was working on an advanced degree in history at Northwestern University. When my parents had completed their family, I was the firstborn of twelve, nearly all of whom went into the professions after leaving the family farm in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. My 97 year old father still lives in the community where he and my mother tried to teach the twelve of us to improve the nick of time, and notch it on our sticks too. My interest in Thoreau grew initially out of my feeling for woods and fields and streams where there was pasture enough for the

imagination. I believe I had read Walden every year since high school, with one or two lapses, for which I have doubtless paid dearly. I see no reason to break a good habit now, and hope when I reach my father's present age to have glimpsed the hound, bay horse, and white doe of the woodlands; and to have watched the turtle dove dive behind a cloud. Derailed by a mosquito wing--the great depression--after graduation from college, I studied a year at VPI, then taught vocational agriculture in Prince Edward County, Virginia, before following my father to Northwestern for my graduate work in American Literature. There I wrote a dissertation on Thoreau and the Abolitionists under the guidance of Leon Howard, who has taught a generation of graduate students to cut a broad swath and shave close. Since 1952 I have served on the faculty of the University of Minnesota, Duluth, teaching Thoreau, editing Thoreau, writing about Thoreau, reading Thoreau, and trying to emulate the man who for 44 years, 9 months and 25 days heard what was in the wind, and marched to the music he heard.



11-29-53

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- My dear Henry,
- A frog was made to live in a swamp, but a man was not made to live in a swamp. Yours ever.
- R.
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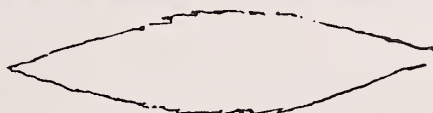
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9-4-53

NOTES AND QUERIES

Miss Diane Jane Thoreau of Ventura, California, has become a life member of the Thoreau Society. Life membership is one hundred dollars.

In his autobiography, *All the Strange Hours* (P. 171), Loren Eiseley says, "Critics, good friends in academia, sometimes ask, as is so frequently the custom, what impelled me to become a writer, what I read, who influenced me. . . . Any educated man is bound to live in the cultural stream of his time. If I say, however, that I have read Thoreau, then it has been Thoreau who has been my mentor; this in spite of the fact that I did not read Thoreau until well into middle years."

Thomas Blanding informs us that the article on Concord by Alfred Munroe which appeared in Bulletin 133 was originally published in the *NEW YORK TIMES* for April 24, 1869.

Peter H. Matson, in *A PLACE IN THE COUNTRY* (New York: Random House, 1977) wonders how come Thoreau was so naive as to use unseasoned pine for his studs in his Walden cabin--and what the resulting warping and shrinking must have done to his cabin.

When President Carter went to India in January, he took along a set of Thoreau's *JOURNAL* as a gift for Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai, who, we understand, is an ardent reader of Thoreau.

We hear that James R. Mellow, author of *CHARMED CIRCLE: GERTRUDE STEIN & COMPANY*, is working on four interlocking biographies of Thoreau, Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Hawthorne for Houghton Mifflin.

Thomas Blanding (B-lo-J Firestone, Princeton University) is compiling a checklist of all known letters written by or to members of the Thoreau family other than Henry and would appreciate learning of any stray ones, either the manuscripts or the texts.

Current, Inc., Colorado Springs, Col. 80941 are issuing two cards in their "Current Reflections" series quoting from Thoreau: "Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature" and "To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning."

The Current Company (Bristol, R.I. 02809) is offering a presentation copy of the first edition of *A WEEK* from Thoreau to Rev. Barzillai Frost for sale at \$3500 and a first edition of *LETTERS TO VARIOUS PERSONS* presented by Sophia Thoreau to Fannie L. Durfee for \$275.

The Easton Press (47 Richards Ave., Norwalk, Conn.

06857) is including WALDEN in its forthcoming "100 Greatest Books Ever Written" series at \$28.50 a volume.

Princeton University Press now expects to publish A WEEK in its new edition in the Fall of 1978 and EXCURSIONS and the first volume of the JOURNAL in 1979.

Tom Mansbridge of Harpenden, Herts, England, writes us of the frequency of Walden as a place name in his country and cites Kings Walden, Saffron Walden, St. Paul's Walden, and Walden Bury among them.

Cody's Bookstore in Berkeley, Calif. have issued another of their annual Thoreau calendars. This one, for 1978, is entitled "To Be Alive" and includes many quotations from HDT.

The Thoreau Lyceum is selling little ceramic necklaces with a drawing of the Walden cabin for \$1.25. They are also selling a Towle pewter plate inscribed "Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads--Thoreau" six inches in diameter for \$10.00. (Both items plus tax and mailing.)

We would be grateful to receive any photographs of individuals or activities at any of the Thoreau Society meetings, to add to the society's archives and to prepare for a future exhibition. When possible, please identify date, individuals and photographer. Send either to your secretary or to the archivist, Marcia Moss, at the Concord Free Public Library.

We are pleased and grateful to announce a gift to the society's treasury of \$300 by August B. Black of Morris, Ill., to help cover the recent rise in postage.

Income from the Bernstein fund is now being used to add copies of doctoral dissertations on Thoreau to the society's archives at the Concord Free Public Library, where they will be available for scholars. The Bernstein Fund was established as a memorial to the late Daniel Bernstein by his family.

The Bellevue Press (60 Schubert Street, Binghamton, N.Y. 13905) sells a woodengraving post card of Thoreau by Michael McCurdy for 15¢ and the Thoreau Lyceum sells a woodcut of Thoreau by Terri Wellman for 10¢.

Joseph Renard's hippy-play WALDEN POND was revived recently on Broadway and was reviewed in the NEW YORK TIMES for March 11, 1978.

Hallmark has recently issued a gift wrapping entitled "Forest Images" which includes a quotation from Thoreau.

A cartoon by L. Pankery (?) in a recent issue of SMILES shows a boss cautioning his employee, "It's not your marching to a different drummer I object to . . . it's your marching to a different quitting whistle."

A syndicated "Small Society" cartoon by Brickman for May 19, 1978, shows a father telling his squabbling children, "Knock it off, you two! You're disturbing my life of quiet desperation."

The 1978 annual meeting of the Thoreau Society of Japan was held in Fukuoka City on May 26, 1978. Prof. Jyoichi Okuda spoke on "WALDEN and the Seasons of Concord" and Prof. Itaru Mori on "'Civil Disobedience' and Hyperbole." Prof. Kodo Yahagi was elected president; Prof. Koh Kasegawa, vice president and secretary for the east district; Prof. Tokihiko Yamasaki, secretary for the west district.

A new "guide to juvenile fiction portraying the handicapped" by Barbara Baskin and Karen Harris is entitled NOTES FROM A DIFFERENT DRUMMER (Bowker, 1977).

An article in the ST. LOUIS GLOBE DEMOCRAT for March 11, 1978 on Vice President Mondale's half-

brother Lester Mondale is entitled "Ozark Thoreau."

Stephen Adams (12A 27th Ave., SE, Minneapolis, 55414) would like to know the English translation of Agiocochook, the Indian name for Mount Washington that Thoreau uses in A WEEK.

The Norman Foerster Prize for 1977 for the best article published in AMERICAN LITERATURE was awarded to Philip F. Gura for his "Thoreau's Maine Woods Indians: More Representative Men."

Mrs. Caroline Moseley (113 Linwood Circle, Princeton, N.J. 08540) would like to know when the Thoreau family acquired its first piano and whether Sophia as well as Helen offered piano instruction.

A new mail order company in Madison, Wisconsin, for luxury items calls itself "Different Drummer."

Your secretary would appreciate learning of any additions or corrections to be made to his THOREAU'S LIBRARY, which was issued as a Thoreau Society Booklet (#11) in 1957 by the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia.

A brochure for the New York City PEOPLE'S LIFE FUND features a drawing of Thoreau in jail and a quotation from "Civil Disobedience" on its cover. The Fund is for loans to "constructive projects in the local community" and its source is "war tax refusal money" as an alternative for those who do not wish to pay taxes for military expenditures.



Thoreau's cabin at Walden · pencil drawing by MAY ALCOTT, published 1869